Dropshipping

Masters Tactics, Insights, and Wisdom from the Pro

Wisdom from the Pros





Table of Contents

Introducing the Dropshippers

2. How to Choose Products

Observe your surroundings

Explore items you're personally interested in

Start with inexpensive items

Use Oberlo to source products

Use AliExpress reviews to gauge opportunity

Consider a general store first

Know your marketing channel

You'll never know until you try

3. How to Run Facebook Ads

Focus on your product first

Keep it simple – just "sell the click"

Build your brand with custom videos

Split test on different audiences

Take advantage of Facebook Messenger bots

Do your own thing once you get the hang of it

It's okay to change ads

4. How to Make Sales Without Facebook Ads

Partner with Instagram influencers

Feature photos of influencers on your Instagram page

Use Instagram Stories to your advantage

Leverage the power of Facebook groups

Present and demonstrate the products to your customers

Boost sales with a cross-selling app

5. "If You Had \$500 to Spend on Marketing, What Would You Do?"

Create and promote engaging content

Make everyday people your product photography models

Use free traffic sources and build as you go

Start with small margins for incremental gains

Take a cheaper "grassroots" marketing approach

6. The Biggest Mistakes Made

Fulfilling orders manually

Copying other people's Facebook ads

Thinking it's easy to market a store

Not reading product reviews

Being careless with apps

Using too many suppliers

Letting small negative feedback dictate big decisions

7. Tips and Advice for First-Time Dropshippers

Balance passion with longevity when picking a niche

Set aside a few hours each day for learning

Learn to be patient and consistent

Get creative with your social media content

Be practical about scaling up

1

Introducing the Dropshippers

One of the best ways to learn and grow is to surround yourself with like-minded people.

And even if you can't spend time with them in person, the glorious World Wide Web helps to close those physical gaps for you.

That's what this ebook is all about: helping to connect aspiring and growing dropshippers to the knowledge, ideas, and resources they need to flourish – from people who have been there before.

We interviewed 19 dropshipping <u>entrepreneurs</u> who have absolutely killed it with their stores. Some of them are seasoned, while others had the savvy, determination, and opportunity to hit gold on their first shot.

We're going to pull out their shining gems of advice and reflection to give you a wealth of insights for your own efforts.

In this ebook, we'll see what the Dropshipping Masters have to say about:

- How to choose products
- How to run Facebook ads
- How to make sales without Facebook ads
- What they'd do with \$500 to spend on marketing
- The biggest mistakes they've made
- Advice and inspiration for first-timers

Let's start by introducing the successful dropshippers you'll be learning from.

Ashley Banks

As a UK-based web developer who's built dozens of ecommerce stores, Ashley learned how to start dropshipping for himself in 2017.

He started in the coffee niche and eventually came across a penguin thermos that went viral and made £4,713.38 (or \$5,925.65) in three months.



Since then, he's decided on starting a dropshipping business that's more in line with his passion of martial arts.

Read more about Ashley here.

Karolis Rimkus

Tired of his 9-to-5, Karolis began dropshipping as a side-hustle to fund a three-month trip around the world with his wife.

Turns out that his running apparel store scored them enough funds to extend their trip to eight months and 12 countries.



Over ten months, the store brought in \$14,960, allowing him to live the <u>digital</u> nomad <u>lifestyle</u> of working while he travels.

Now, he uses the Instagram marketing skills he learned to run a social media business for his clients.

Read more about Karolis here.

Jenny Lei

After seven failed attempts, Jenny started a handbag store that went on to earn an incredible \$680,532 in eight months – \$1,000 of which was from her first day!



The secret to her swift success was that she had been running a recipe Instagram page that had 800,000 followers, where she was able to test her audience before transitioning to Facebook ads.

This millennial entrepreneur posted a handbag to Instagram in May 2018 and the rest was history.

Yuanda Wang

As a young entrepreneur, Yuanda started his first venture in affiliate marketing when he was just 15 years old.

He learned how to start dropshipping in late 2017, experimenting with several product niches before he found success selling phone accessories.



Fast forward four months, and he had already made \$18,359.

Now, he's at university studying psychology, which doubles in value as it helps make his dropshipping game even stronger.

Read more about Yuanda here.

Tim Vangsness

Tim Vangsness is a serial entrepreneur from Australia. He first got into online marketing over six years ago when he launched a BMX website and spent hours learning how to drive traffic to it with SEO and Google Ads.



After that, he got hooked on dropshipping. Tim has started multiple dropshipping stores selling all kinds of things from t-shirts and sunglasses to watches and selfie lights.

Read Tim's advice for starting a dropshipping store for \$500.

Harry Coleman

Harry is one of those ecommerce millionaires and serial entrepreneurs you hear stories about.

After many years and many different approaches to entrepreneurship, he now has three stores. Two of them, which are both branded general stores, combined to generate an eye-popping \$5,045,515 in 2018.



That's right. \$5 million. Since starting a dropshipping business in 2016.

Today, he manages a team of up to 10 employees to help run his empire, and runs a YouTube channel called The Beast of Ecom.

Read more about Harry here.

Andreas Koenig and Alexander Pecka

These Austrian entrepreneurs were friends for six years before deciding to go into business together in early 2018.

Their first store, which sold an automatic toothpaste dispenser, earned them a whopping one sale. Their second store, a general store, also failed.



But their third store in the pet products niche generated \$144,110 in less than four months.

Read more about Andreas and Alexander here.

Matt Riley

Matt was a 9-to-5 customer service agent at a protein powder company in California when he realized that he wasn't quite fulfilled by his career.

He learned how to start dropshipping and opened several stores, building and tweaking until a handful became profitable. In 2018, his stores collectively generated \$370,000.



And his winning store in the fashion niche started earning him more than \$100,000 a month in revenue.

Needless to say, he's guit his office job and hasn't looked back.

Read more about Matt here.

Mandie and Aubrey

These Utah-based moms stand out from the other dropshipping success stories.

They started with a Facebook group to sell various household, beauty, and kids products with a slight markup. It really caught on, so they decided to build a dropshipping store.



They launched the store in April 2018 and earned more than \$100,000 in six months.

The real kicker is that they've never spent a dollar on advertising!

Read more about Mandie and Aubrey here.

Jordan Bourque

With no prior experience – or even much research!

– Jordan succeeded at starting a dropshipping business in his first shot.

Living in a small town in Canada, he used various Facebook dropshipping groups to connect with other entrepreneurs to share ideas and keep learning.



And it paid off.

His outdoor hobby store raked in 10,000 orders and \$100,000 in revenue within a year – \$20,000 of which he earned in a single month.

Read more about Jordan here.

Ryan Carroll

Ryan started his women's swimsuit business in 2016, fresh out of high school.

Two months into it, he really got the hang of it. His sales started doubling every month and he made \$60,000 in four months.



He sold the store to invest in another venture. When it failed, he got right back up, building as many as 25 stores in every imaginable niche.

In the end, he's back to swimwear. His store <u>Bali Babe</u> made more than \$300,000 in 2018.

Read more about Ryan here.

Ross Madden

Hailing from Ireland, Ross started his first dropshipping business as a way to make some extra cash while studying at university.

His first two stores flopped, but the third store generated 30,000 orders for his charcoal beauty products.



In January 2018, he hit his monthly sales record of €40,000 (or \$45,150). In a year, he made almost €200,000 (\$225,750).

Read more about Ross here.

Vasco San-Payo

Vasco quit his design job at a Lisbon advertising agency after starting a dropshipping business.

He sold dropshipped men's fashion accessories as well as custom branding <u>print-on-demand</u> products in his store, <u>The Lion Chain</u>.



His creative talents also came in handy for designing his full brand, complete with ads and collateral.

The Lion Chain earned him \$170,000 in its first year, allowing him to pack up and live the <u>digital nomad</u> life in Bali.

Read more about Vasco here.

Jacky Chou and Albert Liu

Jacky and Albert took \$5,000 dollars and turned it into \$700,000 in revenue in just eight months.

Their home decor store started as an experiment – they intended to use it as a case study to get more clients for their marketing consultant business.



As they got more and more sales, they decided to invest more time and resources into following their top-performing product.

As you can see, that strategy paid off for these top dropshippers. Literally.

Read more about Jacky and Albert here.

Yuliya Chernykhovskaya and Mike Pavlou

New Jersey natives Yuliya and Mike are one of the many dropshipping success stories of entrepreneurs who made a fortune in their first year.

In this case, \$200,000 in a year, to be exact.

They had prior experience in entrepreneurship:

Yuliya worked as a health coach and business consultant, and they both ran a subscription box brand called NeuroBox.

They credit part of the success to their experience in branding, customer service, and building customer loyalty.

Read more about Yuliya and Mike here.



John was destined to be among the top dropshippers. We know this because he started his first online business when he was just 12 years old.

He ran multiple comedy meme Instagram accounts, and began to get approached from brands to run shoutouts.



Instead of agreeing, he decided to cut out the middleman and sell his own products.

During his winter break from high school, he made a cool \$50,000.

Read more about John here.



Scott Hilse

Scott was a 21-year-old busser at a restaurant in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. He was barely scraping by on \$1,000 a month when he decided he'd had enough.

He started an iPhone case dropshipping store, but cut it short when he started losing money.

Then, after fulfilling his dream of moving to Los Angeles, he began a rather unfulfilling job as an Uber driver.

He decided to relaunch the iPhone case in a single-product store, and earned more than \$130,000 in seven months.

Read more about Scott here.

Jeffrey Ho

Jeffrey was living the stereotypical 9-to-5 dream with a good banking job in Vancouver. Except it wasn't his dream.

So he learned how to start dropshipping. At first, he went through a lot of initial trial and error, not seeing the results he wanted for the first few months.



He kept pushing, and in his first year, his women's fashion store went on to earn \$57,686 in sales.

Read more about Jeffrey here.

Marc Popov and Noah Seibert

Marc and Noah are Berlin-based entrepreneurs and besties. They were just 17 when they started their first ecommerce dropshipping store in December 2017.



Their first store *Simon and Nikolay* was moderately profitable, but has now evolved into more of a fashion magazine.

In their second store, they tested several items until they found a winner in the electronics and gadgets niche.

They marvel at how an ad they wrote in five minutes went on to generate \$30,000 in sales.

Read more about Marc and Noah here.

Now that you've gotten to know our Dropshipping Masters and a glimpse into their dropshipping success stories, let's get to the good stuff.

Next up: a primer on how to choose products for your store.

2

How to Choose Products

Choosing dropshipping products can be daunting. In fact, it's one of the top obstacles that keeps new dropshippers from ever starting in the first place.

How can you be sure you're <u>choosing the best</u> dropshipping products? What if you waste thousands of dollars with no returns?

At the end of the day, you're going to have to take a risk. The best you can do is make it a balanced and strategic risk.

This balance should include your due diligence of research on trends, markets, audiences, and finances – but it should also include resilience, openness to learning as you go, and applying what you learn along the way.

Let's look at some tips from our Dropshipping Masters on how to choose products to sell.

Observe your surroundings

A great method of product research is to just go outside and observe people. Go to a park, mall, restaurant, event, or other public spaces with heavy foot traffic.

What are those people wearing, carrying, and using? Can you spot any trends or patterns? Are there things that went under your radar before you really started paying attention?

This technique is how Ashley Banks stumbled across the most popular item on his coffee store.



Ashley Banks says,

I just stumbled across added extras like the thermo mugs. Because every time I got on a train or bus, I'd always see people with these thermo flasks. So I thought, 'Okay, I'll add one of these products to the site.' And Io and behold, that became the most successful thing.

Explore items you're personally interested in

This isn't a hard-and-fast rule, but if you see demand and viability in a niche that you're interested in or passionate about, go for it!

The logic is simple: if you like it, you're essentially one of your own customers. This can save lots of <u>market research</u> time spent trying to understand your audience and how to cater to their wants and needs.

Karolis Rimkus used his running expertise to find success selling running gear.



Karolis Rimkus says,

trained five times a week. I knew if did this that I could source really good quality products from AliExpress, because I know first-hand what a good quality product is in that category. I can usually tell from the pictures.

Start with inexpensive items

One of the secrets to successful dropshipping is to start with lower-priced items. There are two main reasons for this philosophy:

- 1. It's easier to return or refund without losing too much money.
- 2. Customers are much more likely to make "impulse buys" on stuff that doesn't break the bank.



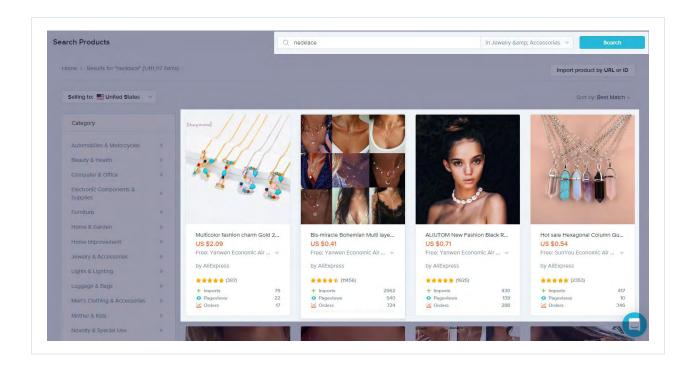
Tim Vangsness says,

Just in case you have returns. If the customer gets the product and they're unhappy with it, it's much easier for you to be able to refund something which didn't cost you too much in the first place. Their expectations are set a bit lower.

Use Oberlo to source products

All of our Dropshipping Masters use <u>Oberlo</u> to help manage their dropshipping businesses.

If you're sourcing dropshipping products through Oberlo, you'll be able to use the exclusive product stats to get an idea of potential winners. From there, it's just a few clicks to add items to your store, manage your product listings and fulfill orders.



In our interview, Jenny Lei was sure to let us know how much she loves it.



Jenny Lei says,

66 I used Oberlo with my necklaces and it's so much easier. If I were a new person doing this again... Step 1: Get your product from Oberlo. Then everything is on one platform.

Use AliExpress reviews to gauge opportunity

Yuanda Wang shared a clever strategy with us. He looks at a supplier's order history to determine if the supplier is dropshipping, or if the recent demand is organic from individual customers.

He then uses this intel to see if there's a solid opportunity to capitalize on.



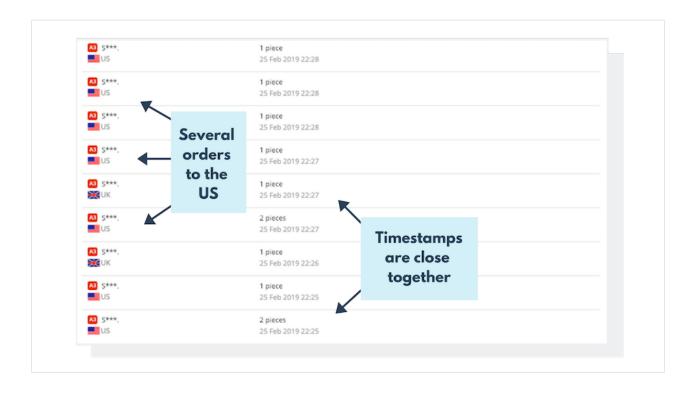
Yuanda Wang says,

66 Before I started my store, I searched up the product on AliExpress, found a supplier, and I realized that there were a lot of organic purchases from people who actually are buying the product for themselves.

They weren't just one-off purchases, because in the order history, you can usually tell if someone is dropshipping. If there's string of names, they're probably dropshipping, especially if it's to the United States.

And that's one of the biggest criteria now that I look for in products: organic sales from people who use AliExpress as consumers and not dropshippers.

Because that shows that there is a demand for the product, and in that exact moment, that supplier is not dropshipping heavily, so you have an opportunity to come in and get a slice of the pie.



Consider a general store first

This may be a controversial opinion in the eyes of some dropshippers, but Harry Coleman and duo Andreas Koenig and Alexander Pecka suggest that dropshipping newbies take a general approach to finding a successful niche.



Harry Coleman says,

66 If you've got experience like I have now, start a niche store and you're good to go. But if you're just getting up and running with things, and you want to test quickly and not waste time, start a general branded store and learn what's working. Then start your niche or oneproduct store.

MASTER BONUS

Check Harry out as he talks about five hot dropshipping products to sell.



Andreas and Alexander used this technique to test a few niches at a time.

This helped them three-fold: they could identify the best dropshipping products to sell, get insight into the audiences who loved them, and learn as they go.



Andreas Koenig says,

We decided to make a general store to test products and find a winning product. If we have only one product in our store, we can't tell if it's a winning product. In a general store, we had the possibility to test five or six niches. Kitchen, beauty, baby, pets.

We were able to test different audiences on different products. Then you can see if a product is doing well, and you can build a niche store with it. That's the key: if you start with a general store, you can test and build your own skills. But, it's hard to get very profitable and big with a general store.

MASTER BONUS

If you're interested in learning more from Andreas and Alexander, check out this video. They recommend five products to sell, explain how much money they spend on ads before cutting them, and show their own process for making video ads.



Know your marketing channel

Another approach to choosing dropshipping products is to cater to your medium. For example, Matt Riley is a master of <u>Facebook ads</u> and <u>Google Shopping Ads</u>.

Naturally, being a master means that he knows which types of products tend to perform well on each channel. He also knows which marketing tactics can help optimize that performance.



Matt Riley says,

66 If I'm looking for a full force in Google Shopping Ads, then I'm looking for products based on the search volume. For Facebook, it has to be a little bit different. It has to be unique, and it has to have <u>viral potential</u> through video marketing.

You'll never know until you try

It's easy to fall into the trap of over-researching and over-thinking your product choice. While you should always do your research to get a general idea of demand and outlook, you'll never really know how a certain item will perform until you try.

That's why Mandie and Aubrey have a Nike-esque "just try it" philosophy.



Aubrey of Mandie and Aubrey says,

66 It's surprising sometimes what does and doesn't do well. Our joke is, 'Hey, do you think this will sell well?' And it's like, 'Just try it, I don't know.' I thought last week that a product was going to be a killer and it didn't sell any... and I thought another product was totally stupid and we sold 400. So I just don't know anymore, which is funny.

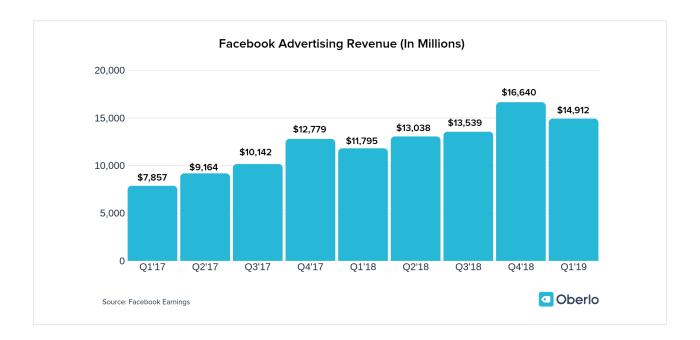
Now that you have some tips on finding the best dropshipping products, let's see what our Masters have to say about the rollercoaster ride that is Facebook advertising.

3

How to Run Facebook Ads

Facebook is an absolute powerhouse when it comes to ecommerce.

If you look at the data from their first quarter of 2019, the company saw <u>26% year-over-year advertising revenue growth</u> compared to the first quarter of 2018 – going from about \$11.8 billion to \$14.9 billion.



Simply put: people love shopping online, and more of them are turning to Facebook and Instagram (which is owned by Facebook) to do it.

When you combine this intel with the sheer amount of time people spend on these two social media platforms alone, you can see a clear recipe for advertising success.

This is why many dropshippers – and most of our Dropshipping Masters – use Facebook ads as the primary revenue-driver for their businesses.

Of course, it'll take some due diligence on your part before you're able to rake in some serious cash with your Facebook advertising strategy.

That's why we've got some juicy tips from the Masters to help shorten your learning curve.

Focus on your product first

There are a lot of approaches for diving into Facebook marketing, and you'll hear a lot of discussion and strategies for <u>finding the right audience</u>.

While your audience is a massive part of the formula, Jordan Bourque emphasizes that your product should come first.

No point in searching for the right audience when no one wants the product to begin with, eh?



Jordan Bourque says,

66 I think the product is the most important thing. You can test different audiences and go in-depth later, but in the testing phase, you've got to keep it very simple.

The product is the most important thing, because your audience is either going to like your product or they're not. So if you see some sort of traction with the product, that's when you want to dive into the audiences.

Keep it simple – just "sell the click"

The ideal type of ad can vary drastically depending on the nature of the product and the type of audience that's interested in it. But a good rule of thumb when it comes to Facebook product ads is to keep it clean and only say what you need.

Marc and his partner Noah feel that this is a key for their success.



Marc Popov says,

66 It's probably the simplicity that makes our best ad successful. It's basically a carousel ad of four images and it features all the key elements of our product.

I think it looks visually appealing because when you scroll and you see a bunch of videos and then you see this phone case shown on a black background, it pops up on the feed. People stop, they look at it, and then they click on it.

MASTER BONUS

If you're interested in hearing more from Marc, check out this video where he gives a detailed overview of the process he follows for researching profitable niches.



To take the simplicity rule a bit further, Harry Coleman doesn't even give specific offers in his Facebook ads. His theory is that Facebook advertising strategy should be geared toward "selling the click" over selling the product itself.



Harry Coleman says,

Con the ad side of things, you need to focus on your link click through rate. And that comes down to how well you are connecting with the person who is looking at the advert. It comes down to these three things that make up a good ad: the attention or hook, the benefits of the product, and the call to action.

A lot of people get this wrong. I generally don't write things like 'Save 50% off today' or 'Save this today, there's only X amount left.' I think this is trying to sell too much. The whole purpose of the advert is just to sell the click, that is it – not the products, just the click.

Build your brand with custom videos

While it's absolutely possible to find success with Facebook ads that feature photos and videos from your suppliers, you should ideally be investing in custom photos and videos when you have the resources.

This is especially true for videos, which are an increasingly killer way to build engagement and snag sales.

Video is a boon for today's entrepreneur, with <u>88% of video</u> marketers saying they're satisfied with their social media ROI.



Shooting your own videos is a powerful tool for building a brand, and many of our Dropshipping Masters – like Ryan Carroll – will tell you that a strong brand is critical.



Ryan Carroll says,

66 It was funny how I realized how to shoot video ads. I was running basic photo ads, and then when competitors started coming in, I could tell that my ads weren't doing as well as they once were.

When I first launched the store in February, I did okay for the first month or two, making a few thousand every day. And then I realized eventually it started slowing down and my Facebook ads were just getting crappy.

I was like, 'I really needed to custom-brand this with my own video ads.' That will completely set you aside from all of your competitors, 100%.

MASTER BONUS

If you're interested to hear more insights from Ryan, take a peek at this video where he discusses some ideas for what to sell.



Split test on different audiences

Facebook's split testing (also commonly called <u>A/B testing</u>) feature lets you directly compare two or more ads with slight changes. For example, you can test the same exact ad on different audiences, or the same ad copy and audience, but with a different photo.

There are infinite ways you can go about it, and it can be a great way to get some intel on the direction you should take for future ads.

Andreas Koenig and Alexander Pecka strongly recommend using this technique to find the right audience.



Andreas Koenig says,

66 You have to have a little bit of money for testing Facebook ads. Facebook wants to earn money with you, and they will not give you the best pixel data in your first steps.

You should split test around 10 different audiences at \$5 a day, and then you'll see from the numbers which could be a winner. Then duplicate this audience and go that way.

If you only make two or three audiences to test, you may not have success and you'll think that it's not a winning product, even though it is maybe. But you were following a false marketing strategy.

PRO TIP

Learn how to set up split test ads here.

Take advantage of Facebook Messenger bots

Ashley Banks had a clever idea when it came to boosting engagement. He used a Facebook Messenger chatbot, which can be operated through companies like Manybot or ManyChat.

He found that this was often the extra push of engagement that many people needed to convert after interacting with his best Facebook ads, as opposed to just being window shoppers.

Plus, you can program the apps so that users can interact with your brand in different ways, like asking questions or browsing inventory.



Ashley Banks says,

I set up a bot based on anyone who commented on a specific advert. It said something like, 'Hey, I appreciate you commenting and spreading the word.' And as a 'thank you,' it would offer a code for free shipping or 10% off.

It was a psychological incentive for them to actually use the code and get something. And I wasn't losing any money, because shipping was priced into the product.

Do your own thing once you get the hang of it

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that you *have* to follow the advice of successful dropshippers who advertise on Facebook. But what works for some people won't always work for others.

Plus, there are way too many factors at play to duplicate what someone else has done, even if you're selling the same product!

At the end of the day, your intuition and situational observations might just take you farther than anyone else's advice.

Vasco San-Payo learned this lesson when he tried to scale-up his Facebook ads.



Vasco San-Payo says,

66 My sales skyrocketed in September after I basically reinvented the wheel in Facebook ads and tried things by intuition. I scaled horizontally instead of vertically.

Before that, I was doing what I would see in articles and YouTube videos.

I was trying to scale really aggressively in July and August, spending almost \$1,000 per day doing this strategy called 'manual bidding' in Facebook. But I wasn't very profitable because I was trying to scale too hard, too fast.

So in September, instead of putting a lot of money into a few campaigns, I just created like 80 campaigns with little money. That's horizontal scaling – creating a lot of campaigns, having a lot of audiences. And I just deleted the audiences that were not performing and increased the budget on the audiences that were performing good. And that was much better.

It's okay to change ads

It can be easy to misstep on your Facebook ads, which has led to some mild hysteria and unnecessary rules around how to manage your ad accounts.

As Jenny Lei points out, one of these rules is that you can't change a Facebook ad for 24 hours. While some say that this will hurt your performance, she's realized that it's never impacted her before.



Jenny Lei says,

66 Don't listen when people say not to change a
Facebook ad for 24 hours. You can change it whenever,
it runs fine!

I was so scared to change an ad that was working well that I'd just duplicate it and duplicate it until I had a bunch of ads that were the same. Then I was like, 'Jenny, this is stupid, just edit it.' I have ads running at \$1,500 a day and I'll change it at 11pm. Nothing bad happens.

Hopefully, you have a better idea of the dos and don'ts of posting ads on Facebook.

If you don't have a big budget for ads, fret not – the next chapter is just for you. Let's look at how to make sales without Facebook ads.

How to Make Sales Without Facebook Ads

It's no secret that <u>Facebook ads</u> are one of the best ways to increase sales for your ecommerce website.

According to Mary Meeker's Internet Trends report, 26% of Facebook users who clicked an ad went on to make a purchase, which shows that there's an incredible selling potential if you're able to target the right group of people.

But what if you don't have the money to spend on ads? Is your quest to build a successful online store doomed for failure?

If you look beyond the standard advice that is to invest in Facebook advertising, there are a number of alternative ways to market your online store that are just as effective (in some cases, even more so) in driving product sales.

Let's take a look at some recommendations from our Dropshipping Masters on how to make sales without Facebook ads.

Partner with Instagram influencers

Instagram is home to more than 500,000 influencers with more than 15,000 followers.

To add to that, <u>81%</u> of these influencers are "micro-influencers" with 15,000 to 100.000 followers.

If you've been living under a rock, <u>micro-influencers</u> are influencers with smaller followings. They're easier to connect with and their audience is usually receptive to whatever content they share on their pages. Unsurprisingly, they've have helped many store owners get their first sale and even earn a sustainable income.

Karolis Rimkus, for example, used Instagram to get eyeballs on his running gear brand, and built relationships with Instagram influencers to help market his products.



Karolis Rimkus says,

At first I made contact with several different influencers.

I would send micro-influencers, individuals with like
8,000 followers, an item they could host a giveaway
with, or just send them a few free products in exchange
for mentions. It worked, and I was growing my store
and making sales.

MASTER BONUS

If you're interested in learning more about influencer marketing from Karolis, check out this video.



Feature photos of influencers on your Instagram page

When it comes to promoting your product with the help of an influencer, photos help to boost authenticity. And Instagram influencers are usually happy to share their photos with the brands they work with.

As you score partnerships with various influencers on Instagram, see if you can find a few up-and-coming influencers who are willing to send you their photos where they're reviewing your product or brand.

Tim Vangsness, who shared with us his plan for how to build a profitable leggings store with a \$500 startup budget, recommends aspiring store owners to get as many photos as possible.

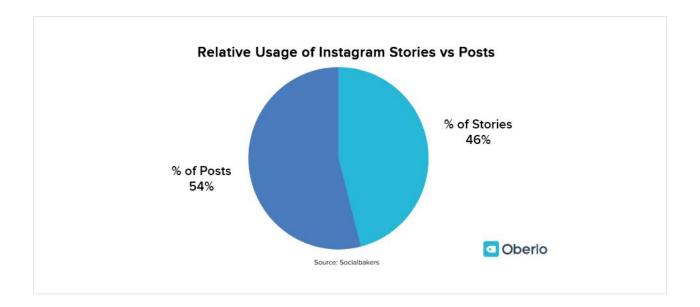


Tim Vangsness says,

66 You want images of influencers using your product to show that it's legitimate. For certain products, if you manage to get them to send you a good photo, the cost of sending the product to someone might bring two or three times the amount in sales.

Use Instagram Stories to your advantage

According to <u>Socialbakers</u>, IG Stories have grown in popularity so much that brands are using them as frequently as they are using normal posts.



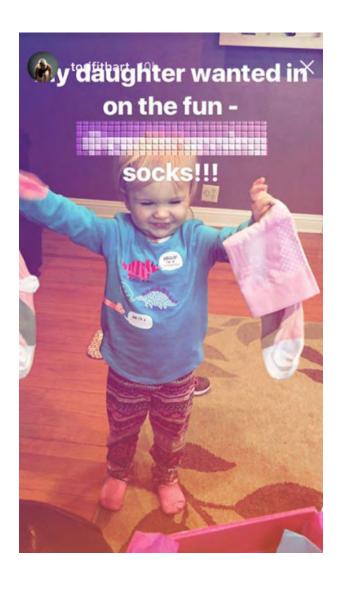
The fact that the content is accessible for a limited period means there's an urgency that most forms of marketing mediums don't offer.

In other words, <u>Instagram Stories</u> have the potential to make people curious, engaged, and receptive.

Remember Karolis Rimkus' influencer marketing strategy from the first point? One of his best influencer partnerships involved the influencer endorsing his product through an Insta story.

Karolis got in touch with a suburban mom blogger who was gaining influence on Instagram for her fitness and running posts. He sent her free items to review. When the package arrived, she posted images of her kids unwrapping the box on IG Stories.

Her followers loved it and trusted her content, and sales started to pour in.





Karolis Rimkus says,

66 Don't hesitate in exploring beyond the standard content feed. I would have not known the potential of Instagram Stories if I hadn't experienced it.

Leverage the power of Facebook groups

If you don't have a budget for ads, but you still want to generate sales from Facebook, consider posting about your products in Facebook groups.

Put simply, Facebook groups are communities of common people with targeted interests.

As you contribute to the group and help other people out, you'll see that the community is there; they're going to listen to you, share your content, and even buy products based on your recommendations.

Utah-based mom entrepreneurs Mandie and Aubrey had their humble beginnings as a small Facebook group. The initial plan was to use the group to sell products locally to people within their circle, which consisted of other moms and friends.

Mandie and Aubrey would order the supplies in bulk and have their delivered at their door, where customers would come to pick them up.

It was a basic setup, fueled by the personal bond and relationship Mandie and Aubrey had developed with so many of their clients through the Facebook group. Customers trust their recommendations and will give them their business again and again.



Mandie of Mandie and Aubrey says,

We get about 40 to 50% repeat customers every week. We've got some people where we know their names now and we're like, 'Oh, love her. She buys everything every week.'

This goes to show how a Facebook group can serve as a foundation for a thriving ecommerce business, helping aspiring entrepreneurs to find an audience to sell to.

Moreover, groups are a great way to drive traffic to an existing store. Store owners can post about their brand in groups to drive traffic to their website, and then use product page best practices to convert visitors into customers.



Tim Vangsness says,

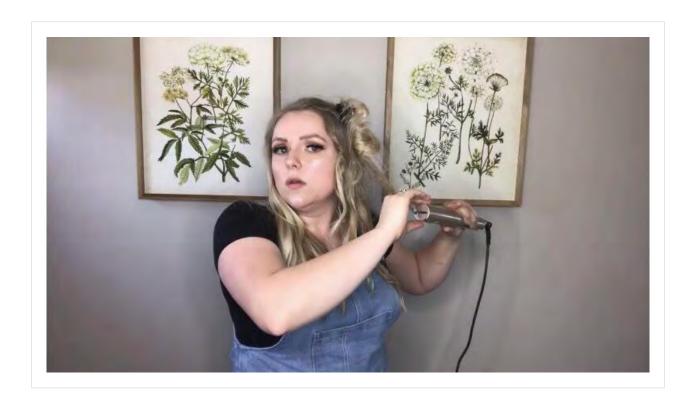
66 If you come across Facebook groups relevant to your niche, take advantage! Post about your products in them to try to generate traffic.

Present and demonstrate the products to your customers

Even if your products are simple to use, it's helpful to create some tutorial or demonstration to explain how they work and how can customers get the most out of their features.

Mandie and Aubrey, for instance, tested every item themselves before they recommended it to a group member.

They ordered the products themselves, then took photos to demonstrate how they work. They even did some <u>Facebook live videos</u> to explain the product's features and uses.



Doing this helped them get a lot of good feedback. Customers knew they'd be receiving high-quality products as the group owners were using it themselves.



Mandie of Mandie and Aubrey says,

66 Customers saw the content and they'd say, 'Oh my god, you're applying that tooth whitening product? And those are your teeth?' and I'm like, 'Yes, here's my face and my very own teeth!'

Boost sales with a cross-selling app

<u>Cross-selling</u> is where you recommend a product relevant to the one that's already in the customer's shopping cart.

An example would be recommending a screen protector for the smartphone that the consumer is about to buy.

Here's the great thing about this tactic: cross-selling doesn't just increase average order value; it also increases the lifetime value of your customers.

In other words, it encourages people to make additional purchases from your store while they remain customers. And that's why it's so valuable to the bottom line of your business.

Incredibly, most ecommerce platforms of today allow you to automate the entire process. You just need to install a cross-selling app that's compatible with your platform of choice, and it'll help increase the sales of your store by recommending relevant products to your customers.

Ross Madden, for example, had great success when he installed a cross-selling app on his charcoal products store.



Ross Madden says,

66 I installed the app several months after launching my website. When someone added the charcoal powder to their cart, a pop-up would come up, giving them an offer of a toothbrush to buy together. To my surprise, 60% of customers would always opt-in for the toothbrush. And I made more sales for the toothbrush than I did for the charcoal powder!

MASTER BONUS

Interested in learning more about Ross? Check out this game of "13 questions."



As you can see, there are several opportunities to make ecommerce sales that extend far beyond Facebook ads.

The quickest ways to diversify your <u>marketing approach</u> use tactics like influencer marketing, product demonstrations, community building, and cross-selling.

In the next chapter, we'll see what our Dropshipping Masters would do if they had only \$500 to spend on marketing.

"If You Had \$500 to Spend on Marketing, What Would You Do?"

The catch-22 of starting any business is that you generally need money to make money. Ideally, you have some cash to invest upfront in building a beautiful and user-friendly store, creating quality visuals, and marketing to the right audience at the right time.

While having a few thousand can help streamline and maximize your time and effort, it's not always possible.

The great thing about dropshipping is that it's 100% possible to find success on a small budget. Many of our Dropshipping Masters have done this themselves.

We asked: "If you had \$500 to spend on marketing, what would you do?"

Here's how they answered.

Create and promote engaging content

Yuliya Chernykhovskaya and Mike Pavlou have expertise in branding and building loyal audiences. So in addition to Facebook ads for products, they'd direct audiences to more organic content.



Yuliya Chernykhovskaya says,

66 I would spend most of it on Facebook ads. But a quarter to half of that money, I would spend on creating content marketing and running ads to that.

So not just running ads to products, but actually content that engages our audience, that warms them up and familiarizes them with our brand. And then run product ads to that already warmed-up audience because they trust us, so the conversions become a lot cheaper.

Digging a bit further, Yuliya and Mike told us about how blog posts and organic Facebook content like memes and jokes helped them build their loyal audience.

They created this content around the general theme of their store. Once they secured the interest and trust of their audience, they were able to successfully sell their products.



Yuliya Chernykhovskaya continues,

For us, it's actually worked to not be very winningproducts-focused. It's worked to be really brand-focused, really people-focused. To create content that people love, and then say, 'Hey, by the way, these are our products and they just so happen to be dropshipped.'

With the style of business we've created, we could do dropshipping, private label, manufacturing our own product. It doesn't really matter because we lead with the brand, not just the product. So I think that definitely gives the business more value and longevity.

MASTER BONUS

Wanna hear more from Yuliya and Mike? Check out this video where they recommend 5 huge potential products for dropshipping and how they would brand them for a niche store.



Make everyday people your product photography models

If you're familiar with dropshipping, you probably know the potential perils of using supplier photos and videos instead of your own. You might have a stellar product, but unappealing, boring, or even straight-up ugly visuals.

While <u>taking your own photos</u> and videos is an ideal solution, getting your hands on professional models and high-quality cameras and props can swiftly break your marketing budget.

Tim Vangsness has a crafty solution: he uses friends or family as models, or he strolls into the city center and finds his own models in everyday people. And in today's world of user-generated content, it's not critical to spend thousands on a photo shoot – you can even take winning product photos with your smartphone.

Here's Tim's advice on using this tactic with a leggings dropshipping store.



Tim Vangsness says,

Willing to try the leggings on and give me a review in person. I'd also take photos with them. I can give a free sample and encourage them to tag us in a photo of them wearing the leggings. If they've got any decent followers, I might be able to sales through their promotion.

And if I'm filming the whole event, I can get video footage of them. So in my ads, not only can I run photos of people wearing the leggings, but I can also run videos.

I think you'll find that if you just go talk to people, they'll be more than willing to just try stuff out. Especially if they get to keep a sample at the end.

Use free traffic sources and build as you go

Tim goes on to explain that once you've got these photos, you can use them to generate free traffic in addition to paid traffic like Facebook ads.

Once you have that traffic, you can take a closer look at how things are performing, which will give you a better idea of what your next step should be.



Tim Vangsness continues,

Videos I recorded of people trying my leggings on. I'd share those on social media and using free sources of traffic to get people onto my website to see how they convert.

Some people enjoy using different platforms like Quora, Reddit, or Imgur. Whatever platform you have experience with, trying to use that to get access to free traffic is important.

If I can get any form of positive conversion, then that's awesome. If not, then I'm going to try to think why not. It may be because there's something wrong with the website, or it may be because something isn't working well with my marketing.

MASTER BONUS

Tim Vangsness actually gave us a full interview on the \$500 marketing question. Read the interview here.

Start with small margins for incremental gains

Scott Hilse found his success selling a relatively inexpensive item – an iPhone case that he paid around \$3 for, then sold for \$10 plus \$2.95 shipping.

When we asked him what he'd do with a \$500 marketing budget, his answer was more strategic: he went straight to pricing and margins.

He recommends cheap items with small margins to start, then building momentum over time as you build customer trust and your <u>Facebook pixel</u> gathers more data.



Scott Hilse says,

66 If you're looking for a niche market, I would sell the cheapest product you can. Keep the price and shipping low. Make it so you're at least making a little money, but as you're doing this, you're seasoning your Facebook pixel and building that email list.

So even if you only spend \$500, you'll still get your money's worth with that data, because if you set your website up right and it looks trustworthy, people will order from you for the right price. Maybe you're not making too much up-front, but in the long run, it's still going to be a lot.

MASTER BONUS

For more on choosing winning products from Scott, peep this video.



Take a cheaper "grassroots" marketing approach

While Facebook ads is one of the most popular ways for dropshippers to score sales, there are lots of other ways you can manage with a lower marketing budget. These typically involve "grassroots" tactics like manually reaching out to people online and in the real world.



Albert Liu says,

Use manual outreach to influencers on Instagram to try to get some cheap traffic to your site. Ask friends and family, anyone you know. Post it on Facebook groups. It's a low cost way of getting potential buyers on your website.

And before you do all of this, make sure you have the Facebook pixel installed. Any person who goes onto your site will add additional data for you to use on the Facebook platform later on.

Albert goes on to explain how he and Jacky initially spent thousands, but that's by no means the only way. Especially if you can get crafty in your approach.



Albert Liu continues,

66 Essentially, we spent \$4,000 to buy data via Facebook ads. But it's possible to lower the cost of that \$4,000 down to \$500 through creative methods, which can help you find the winner and saturate your Facebook pixel pretty quickly.

PRO TIP

Learn how to set up your Facebook pixel here.

Some people say that it's just not possible to have a successful dropshipping store without a lofty marketing budget. But as you can see, some of our Dropshipping Masters disagree!

Now that you know how to find success on a budget, let's take a look at the darker side: the biggest mistakes our Masters have made (and how you can avoid them yourself).

The Biggest Mistakes Made

No one is perfect, and no successful dropshipper has ever reached to his or her elite status without a few bumps along the way.

From choosing the wrong payment gateway to not considering visitor experience, even the most seasoned entrepreneurs can make mistakes when trying to build and grow a dropshipping store.

Our Dropshipping Masters are no different.

In this chapter, we're going to focus on some of the biggest mistakes they made so you can get a better idea of what to expect as you make your own decisions.

Fulfilling orders manually

Manual fulfillment can be a drain on time and resources. While it doesn't take too much time when you're just starting out and you're at 10 orders a month, what happens when you reach hundreds or thousands of them?

As Jacky Chou and Albert Liu found out, this method of order fulfillment isn't feasible for the ambitious dropshipper.



Jacky Chou says,

66 From WordPress, I was manually fulfilling about 5,000 orders a month. I did it probably for six hours a day sometimes. It was ridiculous. With Oberlo, it's a lot easier, since you don't have to fulfill as many times.

THE TAKEAWAY

Use **Oberlo** to streamline your dropshipping operations!

Copying other people's Facebook ads

When you first create a Facebook ad, it's second nature to see what others are doing to try and figure out what's resonating with a particular audience. However, many dropshipping entrepreneurs enter a state of self-doubt and think their ads might not be as big a hit.

Unsurprisingly, they carbon-copy ads that are running and think they struck gold. But more often than not, this isn't feasible.

As Yuanda Wang tells us, you are wrong if you think you'll become successful replicating other dropshippers' ads.



Yuanda Wang says,

Was copying other people's ads. When I started out, I felt like I didn't know how to make engaging content at all.

And the difference between now and then is now I understand that people don't want to see just an ad. They want the entire experience. So now, you have to make an ad that's super subtle, in a way that it doesn't seem like ad. My approach is for it to seem like a meme.

THE TAKEAWAY

Your ad is the first thing people will notice, provided that it isn't yawnworthy. That means original content, captivating images, and other elements that stand out in people's feeds.

Thinking it's easy to market a store

Marketing is essentially the biggest revenue-generating activity for ecommerce stores. Unfortunately, it's also one of the biggest headaches.

What worked last week may not work today. <u>Algorithms are changing</u>, and every social media platform is releasing feature after feature.

So whoever thinks it's easy to market a store is setting themselves up for disappointment.

Jeffrey Ho's biggest frustrations came with learning how to market a store.



Jeffrey Ho says,

being able to market the products and the store itself is a different story. That was one of the things that was holding me back from making it successful. I think it takes time and effort to be able to learn from scratch the marketing process that works well for your store.

THE TAKEAWAY

Marketing should be something that you master as soon as possible.



Not reading product reviews

Several dropshippers make the mistake of choosing products without exploring what others think of it. For them, the visual appeal of an item is a sign that it is going to resonate well with the audience.

The reality, however, is almost the opposite. As Harry Coleman discovered, neglecting product reviews could land your business in hot water.



Harry Coleman says,

66 One of the biggest mistakes I've made is not reading reviews of products. You you may find a product which looks good, but then in the AliExpress comments, you find that people are not happy with the product.

Or you see an advert or someone selling something similar, and again, you don't read the comments, you just look at the engagement, and you go ahead and start to sell it, and the product is just naff.

Again, you're just gonna burn through a ton of money. You may make a load of sales, but trust me - you will get stung with charge-backs and returns.

THE TAKEAWAY

Don't skimp on reviews when <u>choosing products to sell through your</u> store.

Being careless with apps

From automating an email marketing campaign to recommending additional products in a widget, it's common for dropshipping entrepreneurs to use apps that help them streamline their operations. However, some make the mistake of being too casual with their use, overlooking the fact that ecommerce apps are just as prone to hacks and bugs as the apps installed on their smartphones.

As Ryan Carroll got to know, being careless with an app can backfire massively.



Ryan Carroll says,

We had this tracking app that's supposed to send tracking numbers, everything like that, and it wasn't actually fulfilling any of the orders. Even though they were being shipped out, it wasn't sending the tracking numbers and marking them fulfilled. And we had 15,000 orders that were just unfulfilled.

THE TAKEAWAY

Conduct an occasional check on the apps you install on your ecommerce website to ensure their efficient functioning.

Using too many suppliers

A famous proverb says that variety is the spice of life, but for many dropshippers it is the dependable and constant that make life easier. Assuming you use multiple suppliers for the same product or service, the coordination needed to manage relationships and stock levels between a large pool of vendors can become a stressful burden.

Speaking to us, Andreas Koenig and Alexander Pecka revealed what dropshippers are missing out on by using several different suppliers.



Andreas Koenig says,

We had 40 items in this store from various suppliers.

That was a big mistake. Now, we have two suppliers and a really good connection with them.

It's better to work like that because when we have a winning product and the connection with the supplier works well. I can talk to them and ask them what they're selling that's also very popular in their store.

Then they can give us some input. They know what that type of customer wants too, because they're in the same niche.

THE TAKEAWAY

It's easier to build and grow a relationship with a few suppliers than it is with several.

Letting small negative feedback dictate big decisions

Some dropshippers seem to believe that any negative customer experience is a personal reflection on the quality of their setup.

What they fail to realize is that the majority of store owners get a negative reaction at some point or another. Hence, first-time dropshippers shouldn't immediately shift gears when a customer comes out to complaint about a specific aspect of their business.

In our interview, Jenny Lei made sure to tell us how letting one negative comment from a customer influence your decision making can hurt your long term goals.



Jenny Lei says,

66 At first, if someone said that their bag zipper broke, I'd stop selling the bag because I'd think, 'I can't have this happen again.'

But even the best companies are going to have zippers breaking, something is going to go wrong in shipping, or something is going to get smushed. It's okay. I have customers where something went wrong, I fixed it, and they came back and bought again.

THE TAKEAWAY

Care about your customers, but don't let one negative comment bring you down.

There you have it. The biggest mistakes our Dropshipping Masters made and what you can do to avoid them over the course of your journey.

In the next chapter, you'll directly hear from these successful entrepreneurs as they share tips and advice for budding dropshippers.

7

Tips and Advice for First-Time Dropshippers

Congratulations on dipping your toes in the world of dropshipping. It takes courage to try something new. And we truly believe that this business model has the potential to change lives for the better with the prospect of significant returns.

But with more and more people exploring the space – and launching ecommerce stores on the fly – you want to do everything you can to both start on the right foot and get more eyeballs on your business.

That's where good business advice can be a godsend for first-time dropshippers.

We asked our Dropshipping Masters: "What dropshipping tips and advice would you give to someone just starting out in the field?"

Here's what they had to say.

Balance passion with longevity when picking a niche

When starting an ecommerce business, a lot of people will just pick a dropshipping niche they're passionate about.

Although that's a great place to start, long-term success requires a careful evaluation of whether the products within a niche resonate with consumers.

Why? Because passion alone isn't going to cut it.

In fact, you can have the best-looking website in the world and still fail if there's no audience for your product. So, instead of betting it all on your passion, dig into your store's data early to see if the products that you intend to sell have the potential to generate long-term revenue.

Ashley Banks knows the importance of balancing passion with potential. Here's his advice:



Ashley Banks says,

66 Find a niche that you are actually interested in and that you can kind of continue with longevity. Mine was a thermos, but I quickly got bored with it because it wasn't my passion.

And also, don't think that's it. It's very easy just to go on to AliExpress, pick a product and import it through Oberlo and then just try and market that. Don't be that person. Learn from the data in your store's dashboard rather than just picking a product.

Set aside a few hours each day for learning

While dropshipping looks simple on paper, there's a bit of a learning curve at the start. As someone doing this for the very first time, you'll need to get familiar with the moving parts of this business model.

For example, you may not be aware that most ecommerce platforms allow you to set up and automate email marketing campaigns, or the fact that Instagram Stories are one of the best ways to engage prospective customers. The best way to learn all this is to set aside some time each day for education.

Andreas Koenig and Alexander Pecka remember the time they put into learning the ins and outs of the dropshipping business and advice first-time dropshippers to do the same.



Andreas Koenig says,

66 Go to bed with your journal, watch videos, read articles, and learn everything you need to for two or three months. Doing this will help you acquire the basic knowledge. Block time for this, because it's time-consuming. But it's worth it, really.

For those working in a 9-5 position and thinking of starting an ecommerce business on the side, Alexander recommends killing the expectation of free time for the next few months.



Alexander Pecka says,

When you want to do dropshipping, you have to do it 100%. It's not possible to say that you're going to work in your other job at a company, and then play football, then go to the gym, then in the evening spend 3 hours or so on the business. It's not possible. You must do it 100%.

Learn to be patient and consistent

Success in the world of dropshipping can be a slow and lonely climb. Whether you're working with an influencer or running Facebook ads, it'll take time to start seeing results. Be patient, as it's not a get-rich-quick scheme.

If patience isn't one of your virtues, try developing as much of it as you can by having a frame of mind that whatever you're doing is eventually going to pay off.

Also, try being consistent with your approach by offering the same branding, marketing, and communications to both desktop and mobile consumers.



Jeffrey Ho says,

66 It's all about patience and consistency. You are, to the core, operating a business. It's unrealistic to expect it to return you \$1,000 when you put \$500 in, just in the bat of the eye. It is going to take time, and it also takes some prior research. But as long as you keep at it, it will pay off in the end.

MASTER BONUS

Wanna hear more from Jeffrey? Check out this video where he gives dropshipping tips on five products to sell in 2019.



Get creative with your social media content

To build multiple sources of traffic that drive visitors to your store, you need to create an effective social media strategy. With more and more people using platforms like Instagram and Facebook to connect with businesses, these sites have become great places to promote an online store.

But going into social media requires plenty of creativity. With attention spans shortening and competition at an all-time high, brands today need to do more than just post about their products to make people take notice.

The easiest way to stand out is to get creative with your posts. Instead of sharing a product picture and saying, "Hey, we're selling this for \$X. Come check it out," try doing something different.

For example, John Robb posted lighthearted memes on his Instagram account to get more eyeballs on his fashion apparel. Below is his advice for first-time dropshippers.



John Robb says,

66 Instead of being intrusive and annoying, try to fit it into the user's feed. Post a cute little meme or a joke. People are so tired of seeing 'Buy now! Shop now! Go check this out!' You just have to do something different.

Mine would have an image and above it would say something like, 'My boyfriend bought me these.' You need to just make it lighthearted and a joke. Then your followers will read it, and look at it, and give it that extra time.

Be practical about scaling up

No matter the operating model or industry, scaling a business – particularly one that has a marketing side to it – requires money. While you don't have to get a second mortgage, you'll need to inject some money into your dropshipping store before it can put money into your bank account.

In our interview, Yuanda Wang made sure to highlight the importance of having enough money to scale a dropshipping business.



Yuanda Wang says,

66 I think a really important piece of advice is you need around \$1,000 to start. If you don't have the funds, and you want to start your own business, you need to find ways to make money.

Because I have been in that zone, where I had no money to spend on my dropshipping website, even though I had made sales with it, I wasn't able to scale it.

Eventually, I landed a part-time job working in an office. And it was the exact time that I landed this position that my second dropshipping store started making incremental sales. I think it happened because I had gained confidence in the fact that I have cash coming in, I can actually spend on ads without being worried or overwhelmed.

For a more specific breakdown of where you'll be spending the money, watch our YouTube video.



Now get out there and make some sales!

Friends, our time together has come to an end.

Throughout this ebook, our Dropshipping Masters have shared their stories, insights, and advice for:

- How to choose the right dropshipping <u>products to sell</u>
- Dos and don'ts for running profitable <u>Facebook ads</u>
- How to make sales without Facebook ads, through tactics like influencer marketing
- What they'd do with a \$500 marketing budget
- The biggest mistakes they've made along their dropshipping journeys
- How first-time dropshippers can succeed at <u>starting an ecommerce</u> business

Hopefully, you're feeling inspired and juiced up to finally start that store you've been thinking about – or improve the one you're already running.

In the meantime, you can always drop us a line with questions and comments.

Happy dropshipping until we meet again!

